

A DESCRIPTION OF YOUNG MEN IN CHRIST NO. 1715

**A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, APRIL 8, 1883,
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

“I write unto you, young men, because you have overcome the wicked one...I have written unto you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the wicked one.”

1 John 2:13, 14.

WHEN I preached a short time ago upon John's message to the “little children” [Sermon #1711—*A Sermon to the Lord's Little Children*], I explained why it was that he first said, “I write,” and then, “I have written.” He is writing, his whole heart is in it, and he cannot help saying that he is earnestly writing to those whom he loves so well. But he has scarcely penned the line before he feels that he must alter that present tense and set it in the past, under the form of, “I have written.” He knows that he must soon be gone from them, and be numbered with those who were, but are not, among living men. These words, then, are the language of a father in Israel still among his children. They are also the words of one who has passed from earth and entered into glory. If what I shall have to say at this time, fairly flowing from the text, shall come to you as Christ's words from His favored disciple John, you will attach the more importance to it, and it will do your hearts the more good. Lifting his head from that dear bosom which gave him unexampled rest he whispers, “I write unto you young men.” Looking down from that favored place which he now occupies so near to the throne of the Lamb, he looks over the battlements of heaven upon us and cries, “I have written unto you, young men.”

In the Christian church there is an order of Christians who have grown so much that they can no longer be called, “babes in grace,” but yet they are not so far matured that they can exactly be called “fathers.” These, who form the middle class of the spiritual-minded, are styled “young men.” Understand that the apostle is not writing here to any according to their bodily age. He is using human age as a metaphor and figure for representing growth in the spiritual life. Age, according to the flesh, often differs much from the condition of the spirit. Many old men are still no more than “babes.” Some children in years are even now “young men” in grace, while not a few young men are “fathers” in the church while young in years. God has endowed certain of His servants with great grace, and made them mature in their youth, such were Joseph, Samuel, David, Josiah and Timothy. It is not age according to the family register that we are now to speak about, but age according to the Lamb's book of life.

Grace is a matter of growth, and therefore we have among us babes, young men, and fathers, whose position is not reckoned according to this fleeting, dying life, but according to that eternal life which has been worked in them by the Spirit of God. It is a great mercy when young men in the natural sense are also young men in the spiritual sense, and I am glad that it is largely so in this church. The fathers among us need not be ashamed of their spiritual seed. In speaking to young men in Christ, I am speaking to a numerous body of Christians among ourselves, who make up a very efficient part of the army of Christ in this region. I would ask them not to be either so modest or so proud as to decline to be thus classed. You are no longer weaklings, do not, therefore, count yourselves mere babes, lest you plead exemption from hard service. You are hardly yet mature enough to rank with the fathers. Do not forget the duties of your real place under cover of aspiring to another. It is honor enough to be in Christ, and certainly it is no small thing to be in spiritual things, a man in the prime of life.

These young men are not babes. They have been in Christ too long for that. They are no longer novices, to whom the Lord's house is strange. They have been born unto God probably now for years. The things which they hoped for at first they have, to a large extent, realized. They know now what once they could not understand. They are not now confined to a milk diet. They can eat meat and digest it well. They have discernment, having had their senses exercised by reason of use, so that they are not so

liable to be misled as they were in their infancy. And while they have been longer in the way, so also have they now grown stronger in the way. It is not a weak and timorous faith which they now possess. They believe firmly and stoutly, and are able to do battle for the "faith once delivered to the saints," for they are strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. They are wiser now than they used to be. When they were children they knew enough to save them, for they knew the Father, and that was blessed knowledge. But now they know far more of the word of God which abides in them through their earnest, prayerful, believing reception of it. Now they have a clearer idea of the breadth and length, and depth and height of the work of redemption, for they have been taught of God. They even venture to enjoy the deep things of God, and the covenant is by no means an unknown thing among them. They have been under the blessed teaching of the Spirit of God, and from Him they have received an anointing, so that they know all things. In knowledge they are no more children, but men in Christ Jesus. Thus they are distinguished from the first class, which comprehends the babes in Christ.

They are not yet fathers because they are not yet so established, confirmed and settled as the fathers are, who know what they believe, and know it with a certainty of full assurance which nothing can shake. They have not yet had the experience of fathers, and consequently have not all their prudence and foresight. They are richer in zeal than in judgment. They have not yet acquired the nursing faculty so precious in the church as the product of growth, experience, maturity and affection. They are going on to that, and in a short time they will have reached it, but as yet they have other work to do more suitable to their vigor. Do not suppose that when we say they are not to be called "fathers," that they are not, therefore, very valuable to the community, for in some senses they are quite equal to the fathers, and in one or two respects they may even be superior to them. The fathers are for contemplation, they study deep and see far, and so they "have known Him that is from the beginning." But a measure of their energy for action may have gone through stress of years. These young men are born to fight. They are the militia of the church. They have to contend for her faith, and to extend the Redeemer's kingdom. They should do so, for they are strong. This is their lot and the Lord help them to fulfill their calling. These must for years to come be our active spirits. They are our strength and our hope. The fathers must soon go off the stage, their maturity in grace shows that they are ready for glory, and it is not God's way to keep His shocks of corn in the field when once they are fully ripe for the granary. Perfect men shall be gathered up with the perfect, and shall enter into their proper sphere. The fathers, therefore, must soon be gone, and when they are gone, to whom are we to look for a succession but to these young men? We hope to have them for many years with us, valiant for the truth, steadfast in the faith, ripening in spirit, and growingly made meet to take their seats among the glorified saints above. Judge for yourselves, dear brethren, whether you are fairly to be ranked among the young men. Have no regard to the matter of sex, for there is neither male nor female in Christ Jesus. Judge whether you are fit to be ranked among those whose full-grown and vigorous life entitles them to stand among the effectives of the church, the vigorous manhood of the seed of Israel. To such I speak. May God the Holy Spirit bless the word!

I. The first thing that John notes about these young men is **THEIR POSSESSION OF STRENGTH**—"I have written unto you young men, because you are strong."

These Christians of the middle class are emphatically strong. This does not imply that any measure of spiritual strength was in them by nature, for the Apostle Paul clearly puts it otherwise concerning our natural state saying, "When we were yet without strength, Christ died for the ungodly." So that by nature we are without strength to do anything that is good and right. We are strong as a wild bull, to dash headlong into everything that is evil. Strong as a lion to fight against all that is good and Godlike, but for all spiritual things and holy things we are utterly infirm and incapable. Yes, we are as dead men until God the Holy Spirit deals with us.

Neither does the apostle here at all allude to the strength of the body in young men, for in a spiritual sense this is rather their weakness than their strength. The man who is strong in the flesh is too often for that very reason strongly tempted to sins of the flesh, and therefore the apostle bids his young friend "flee youthful lusts." Whenever you read the life of Samson you may thank God you had not Samson's muscles and sinews, or else it is more than probable that you would have had Samson's passions, and they might have mastered you as they mastered him. The time of life in which a young man is found is full of perils, and so is the spiritual condition of which it is the type. The young man might almost wish

that it were with him as with the older man in whom the forces of the flesh have declined, for though age brings with it many infirmities, it also has its gain in the abatement of the passions. So you see the young man cannot reckon upon vigor of the flesh as contributing towards real "strength." He has rather to ask for more strength from on high lest the animal vigor that is within him should drag down his spirit. He is glad to be in robust health that he may bear much toil in the Lord's cause, but he is not proud of it, for he remembers that the Lord delights not in the strength of the horse, and takes not pleasure in the legs of a man.

These young men in grace are strong, first of all, *in faith*, according to that exhortation, "Be strong! Fear not!" They have known the Lord now for some time, and they have enjoyed that perfect peace which comes of forgiven sin. They have marked the work of the Spirit within themselves, and they know that it is no delusion, but a divine change, and now they not only believe in Christ, but they know that they believe in Him. They know whom they have believed, and they are persuaded that He is able to keep that which they have committed to Him. That faith which was once a healing touch has now become a satisfying embrace. That enjoyment which was once a sip has now become a draught, quenching all thirst. Yes, and that which was once a draught has become an immersion into the river of God, which is full of water, they have plunged into the river of life and find waters to swim in. Oh what a mercy it is to be strong in this fashion. Let him that is strong take heed that he glory only in the Lord who is his righteousness and strength, but in Him and His strength he may indeed make his boast and defy the armies of the aliens. What says Paul—"I can do all things through Christ that strengthens me." My brothers and sisters, take good heed that you never lose this strength. Pray God that you may never sin so as to lose it, may never backslide so as to lose it, may never grieve the Spirit so as to lose it, for I reckon that to be endowed with power from on High, and to be strong in faith, giving glory to God, is the truest glory and majesty of our manhood, and it were sad to lose it, or even to deface it. Oh that all Christians were so much advanced as to enter the enlisted battalion of the Lord's young men.

This strength makes a man strong *to endure*. He is a sufferer, but mark how patient he is! He is a loser in business, and he has a hard task to earn his daily bread, but he never complains. He has learned in every state to be content. He is persecuted, but he is not distressed by it. Men revile him, but he is not moved from the even tenor of his way. He grows careless alike of flattery and slander. So long as he can please God, he cares not to displease men. He dwells on high, and lives above the smoke of human opinion. He bears and forbears. He bows his neck to the yoke and his shoulders to the burden, and has fellowship with Christ in his sufferings. Blessed is that man who is so strong that he never complains of his trials, never whimpers and frets because he is made to share in the humiliations and griefs of his covenant head. He expected to bear the cross when he became a follower of the Crucified, and he is not now made weary and faint when it presses upon him. It is a fair sight to see young Isaac bearing the wood for the sacrifice. Young Joseph bearing the fetters in prison with holy joy. Young Samson, carrying away the gates of Gaza, bars and all, and young David praising God with his harp though Saul is feeling for his javelin. Such are the exploits of the young men who count it all joy when they fall into manifold trials for Christ's sake. O young man, be strong, strong as an iron column which bears the full stress of the building and is not moved.

This strength shows itself, next, in *laboring for Christ*. The young man in Christ is a great worker. He has so much strength that he cannot sit still. He would be ashamed to leave the burden and heat of the day to be borne by others. He is up and at it according to his calling and ability. He has asked his Lord as a favor to give him something to do. His prayer has been, "Show me what You would have me to do," and having received an answer, he is found in the vineyard trenching the soil, removing the weeds, pruning the vines, and attending to such labors as the seasons demand. His Master has said to him, "Feed My sheep," and "Feed My lambs." And therefore, you shall see him through the livelong day and far into the night watching over the flock which is committed to him. In all this toil he greatly rejoices, for he is strong. He can run and not be weary. He can walk and not faint. "By my God have I leaped over a wall," he says. Nothing is hard for him, or if it is, he remembers that the diamond cuts the diamond, and so he sets a harder thing against a hard thing, and by a firm and stern resolution he overcomes. That which ought to be done he declares shall be done in the power of God, and lo, it is accomplished! Blessed is the church that has her quiver full of these. She shall speak with her adversaries in

the gate. These are the men that work our reformations. These are the men who conduct our missions. These are the men who launch out into the deep for Christ. They make the vanguard of the host of God, and largely compose the main body of her forces. I trust this church has many such. May they yet be multiplied and increased among us that we may never lack for choice soldiers of the cross, able to lead on the hosts of God.

So, also, are these young men strong to *resist attack*. They are assaulted, but they carry with them the shield of faith with which they quench the fiery darts of the enemy. Wherever they go, if they meet with other tempted ones, they spring to the front to espouse their cause. They are ready in the day of battle to meet attacks upon the faith with the sword of the Spirit. They will yield no point of faith, but defend the truth at all hazards. Clad in the full armor of truth, they meet no deadly wound, for by grace they are so preserved that the wicked one touches them not. They resist temptation, and are unharmed in the midst of peril. Do you need an example? Look at Joseph! Where ten thousand would have fallen he stands in snow-white purity. Joseph as contrasted with David is an instance of how a young man may bring greater glory to God than an older man when assailed by a similar temptation. Joseph is but young, and the temptation forces itself upon him while he is in the path of duty. He is alone with his temptress, and no one need know of the sin if it is committed. On the other hand, if he refuses, shame and possibly death may await him through the slander of his offended mistress. Yet he bravely resists the assault, and overcomes the wicked one. He is a bright contrast to the older man, a father in Israel, who went out of his way to compass an evil deed, and committed crime in order to fulfill his foul desire. From this case we learn that neither years, nor knowledge, nor experience can preserve any one of us from sin, but old and young must be kept by the power of God, or they will be overthrown by the tempter.

Furthermore, these young men are not only strong for resistance, but they are strong for *attack*. They carry the war into the enemy's territory. If there is anything to be done, they are like Jonathan and his armor-bearer, eager for the fray. These are very zealous for the Lord of hosts, and are prompt to undertake toil and travail for Jesus' sake. These smite down error, and set up truth. These believe great things, attempt great things, and expect great things, and the Lord is with them. The archers have sorely grieved them, and shot at them, and hated them, but their bows abide in strength, for the arms of their hands are made strong by the mighty God of Jacob. One of them shall chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight.

So have I shown you what these young men are, they are strong, strong to believe, strong to suffer, strong to do, strong to resist, strong to attack. May companies of these go in and out among us to fight the Lord's battles, for to this end has the Lord girded them with strength.

II. Secondly, let us notice that he implies **THEIR NEED OF STRENGTH**, for he says, "You are strong, and you have overcome the wicked one." Between the lines of the text I read the fact, that young men who are strong must expect to be attacked. This also follows from a rule of divine economy. Whenever God lays up stores it is because there will be need of them. When Egypt's granaries were full with the supply of seven years of plenty, one might have been sure that seven years of famine were about to come. Whenever a man is strong it is because he has stern work to do, for as the Israelite of old never had an ounce of manna left over till the morning except that which bred worms and stank, so there never will be a Christian that has a penny's worth of grace left over from his daily requirements. If you are weak you shall have no trial happen to you but such as is common to men, but if you are strong, rest assured that trials many and heavy are awaiting you. Every sinew in the arm of faith will have to be tested. Every single weapon given out of the armory of God will be called for in the conflict. Christian soldiering is no piece of military pastime, it is no proud parade, and it means hard fighting from the day of enlistment to the day of reward. The strong young man may rest assured that he has no force to spend in display, no energy which he may use in boasting and vainglory. There is a heavy burden for the strong shoulder, and a fierce fight for the trained hand.

Why does Satan attack this class of men most? I reckon, first, because Satan is not always sure that the babes in grace are in grace, and therefore he does not always attack beginners. But when they are sufficiently developed, to make him see who and what they are, then his wrath is awakened. Those who have clean escaped from him he will weary and worry to the utmost of his power. A friend writes to me to inquire whether Satan knows our thoughts. Of course he does not, as God does. Satan pretty shrewdly

guesses at them from our actions and our words, and perhaps even from manifestations upon our countenances, but it is the Lord alone, who knows the thoughts of men immediately and by themselves. Satan is an old hand at studying human nature. He has been near six thousand years watching and tempting men and women, and therefore he is full of cunning. But yet, he is not omniscient, and therefore it may be that he thinks such and such a person is so little in grace that perhaps he is not in grace at all. And so he lets him alone, but as soon as ever it is certain that the man is of the royal seed, then the devil is at him. I do not know whether our Lord was ever tempted at Nazareth, while He was yet in His obscurity, but the moment He was baptized, and the Spirit of God came upon Him, He was taken into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. If you become an avowed servant of God do not think the conflict is over, it is then that the battle begins.

Straight from the waters of baptism, it may be, you will have to go into such a wilderness and such a conflict as you never knew before. Satan knows that young men in grace can do his kingdom great harm, and therefore he would gladly slay them early in the day, as Pharaoh wished to kill all the male children in Israel. My brethren, you are strong to overthrow his kingdom, and therefore you need not marvel that he desires to overthrow you.

I think it is right that young men should endure hardness, or else they might become proud. It is hard to hide pride from men. Full of strength, full of courage, full of patience, full of zeal, such men are ready enough to believe the wicked one when he whispers that they are perfect, and therefore trial is sent to keep them out of that grievous snare of the evil one. The devil is used by God as a householder might employ a dirty, smutty servant to clean his pots and kettles. The devil tempts the saint, and thus the saint sees his inward depravity, and is no longer able to boast. The devil thinks he is going to destroy the man of God, but God is making the temptation work for the believer's eternal good. Far better to have Beelzebub the god of flies pestering you, than to become fly-blown with notions of your own excellence.

Besides, not only might this young man be a prey to pride, but he certainly would not bring the glory to God untried that he brings to Him when he overcomes temptation. Read the story of Job up to the time when he is tempted. You say, "We have no story to read." Just so, there was nothing worthy of record only that his flocks and herds continued to multiply, that another child was born and so forth. There is no history to a nation when everything goes well, and it is so with a believer. But when trial comes, and the man plays the man, and is valiant for God against the arch-enemy, I hear a voice from heaven saying, "Write." Now you shall have history—history that will glorify God. It is but right that those who are young men and women in Christ should endure conflicts that they may bring honor to their Father, their Redeemer, and the Holy Spirit who dwells in them.

Besides, it prepares them for future usefulness, and here I venture to intrude the testimony of my own experience. I often wondered, when I first came to Christ, why I had such a hard time of it when I was coming to the Lord, and why I was so long and so wearied in finding a Savior. After that, I wondered why I experienced so many spiritual conflicts while others were in peace. Ah, brethren, I did not know that I was destined to preach to this great congregation. I did not understand in those days that I should have to minister to hundreds, and even thousands, of distressed spirits, storm-tossed and ready to perish. But it is so now with me that when the afflicted mention their experience I can as a rule, reply, "I have been there," and so I can help them, as one who has felt the same. It is necessary, therefore, that the young men should bear the yoke in their youth, and that while they are strong they should gain experience, not so much for themselves as for others, that in later days when they come to be fathers they may be able to help the little ones of the family. Take your tribulation kindly, brother. Yes, take it gratefully. Thank your King that He puts you in commission where the thick of the battle centers around you. You will never be a warrior if you never enter the dust clouds where garments are rolled in blood. You will never become a veteran if you do not fight through the long campaign. The man who has been at the head of the forlorn hope is he who can tell what stern fighting means. So be it unto you. May your Captain save you from the canker of inglorious ease. You must fight in order that you may acquire the character which inspires others with confidence in you, and thus fits you to lead your comrades to the fray. Oh, that we may have here an abundance of the young men of the heavenly family who will defend the church against worldliness and error, defend the weaker ones from the wolves that prowl around, and guard the feeble against the many deceivers that waylay the church of God. As you love the Lord, I

charge you grow in grace and be strong, for we have need of you just now. Oh, my brethren, take hold on sword and buckler; watch and stand fast! May the Lord teach your hands to war and your fingers to fight. In these evil days may you be as a phalanx to protect our Israel. The Canaanites, the Hivites and the Jebusites are upon us just now. War is at all our borders, now, therefore, let each valiant man stand about the King's chariot, each man with his sword upon his thigh because of fear in the night.

III. Thirdly, the text reminds us of **THEIR PROOF OF STRENGTH**. They have overcome the wicked one. Then they must be strong, for a man who can overcome the wicked one is no mean man of war—write him down among the first three. Wicked ones abound, but there is one crafty being who deserves the name of *the* wicked one. He is the arch-leader of rebellion, the first of sinners, the chief of sinners, and the tempter of sinners. He is the wicked one who heads assaults against the pilgrims to Zion. If any man has ever stood foot to foot with him, he will never forget it. It is a fight that once fought will leave its scars, even though the victory is won.

In what sense have these young men overcome the wicked one?

Well, first, in the fact that they have broken right away from his power. They were once his slaves, they are not so now. They once slept beneath his roof in perfect peace, but conscience raised an uproar, and the Spirit of God troubled them, and they clean escaped his power. Once, Satan never troubled them at all. Why should he? They were good friends. Now he tempts them and worries them, and assaults them because they have left his service, engaged themselves to a new master, and become the enemies of him who was once their god. I speak to many who gladly acknowledge that not a bit of them now belongs to the devil, from the crown of their head to the soles of their feet. Christ has bought them, body, soul, and spirit, with His precious blood. And they have assented to the purchase, and feel that they are not their own, and certainly not the devil's, for they are bought with a price, and belong to Him who purchased them. The strong man armed has been turned out by a stronger than he. Jesus has carried the fortress of the heart by storm, and driven out the foe. Satan is not inside our heart now. He entered Judas, but he cannot enter into us, for our soul is filled by another who is well able to hold His own. The wicked one has been expelled by the Holy One, who now lives and reigns within our nature as Lord of All.

Moreover, these young men have overcome the wicked one, not only by breaking away from his power and from driving him entirely out of possession so that he is no longer master, but they have overcome him in the very fact of their opposition to him. When a man resists Satan, he is victorious over Satan in that very resistance. Satan's empire consists in the yielding of our will to his will, but when our will revolts against him then already we have in a measure overcome him. Albeit that sometimes we are much better at willing than we are at doing, as the Apostle Paul was, for he said, "To will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good I find not." Yet still, the hearty will to be clean from sin is a victory over sin, and as that will grows stronger and more determined to resist the temptations of the evil one, in that degree we have overcome sin and Satan. What a blessed thing this is! For fail not to remember that Satan has no weapons of defense, and so, when we resist him, he must flee. A Christian man has both defensive and offensive weapons, he has a shield as well as a sword, but Satan has fiery darts and nothing else. I never read of Satan having any shield whatever, so that when we resist him he is bound to run away. He has no defense for himself, and the fact of our resistance is in itself a victory.

But, oh, brothers and sisters, besides that, some of us who are young men in Christ have won many a victory over Satan. Have we not been tempted, fearfully tempted? But the mighty grace of God has come to the rescue, and we have not yielded. Cannot you look back, not within Pharisaic boasting, but with gracious exultation, over many an evil habit which once had the mastery over you, but which is master of you no longer? It was a hard conflict. How you bit your lip sometimes, and feared that you must yield! In certain moments your steps had almost gone, your feet had well-nigh slipped, but here you are conqueror! Thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Hear what the Spirit says to you when John writes to you, because you have overcome the wicked one, he says, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world."

Once more, in Christ Jesus we have entirely overcome the wicked one already, for the enemy we have to battle with is a vanquished foe—our Lord and Master met him and destroyed him. He is now destitute of his boasted battle-ax, that terrible weapon which has made the bravest men to quiver when

they have seen it in his hand. “What weapon is that?” you ask. That weapon is death. Our Lord overthrew him that has the power of death, that is, the devil, and therefore Satan has not the power of death any longer. The keys of death and of hell are at the belt of Christ. Ah, fiend, we who believe in Jesus shall defeat you, for our Lord defeated you! That bruise upon your head cannot be hidden! Your crown is dashed in pieces! The Lord has sorely wounded you, O Dragon, and your deadly wound can never be healed! We have at you with dauntless courage, for we believe the promise of our Lord, that He will shortly bruise you under our feet. As certainly as you were bruised under the feet of our crucified Lord, so shall you be bruised under the feet of all His seed, to your utter overthrow and contempt. Let us take courage, brothers and sisters, and abide steadfast in the faith, for we have in our Lord Jesus overcome the wicked one. We are more than conquerors through Him that has loved us.

IV. Now I close with my fourth point, which is, **THEIR SOURCE OF STRENGTH**. You have seen their strength and their need of it, and their proof of it, now for the fountain of it. “The Word of God abides in you.” I labor under the opinion that there never was a time in which the people of God had greater need to understand this passage than now. We have entered upon that part of the pilgrim path which is described by Bunyan as the Enchanted Ground. The church and the world appear to be alike bewitched with folly. Half the people of God hardly know their head from their heels at this time. They are gaping after wonders, running after a sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal, and waiting for yet more astounding inventions. Everything seems to be in a whirligig. A tornado has set in and the storm is everywhere. Christians used to believe in Christ as their leader, and the Bible as their rule. But some of them are pleased with lords and rules such as He never knew! Believe me there will soon come new Messiahs. Men are already pretending to work miracles. We shall soon have false Christs, and “Lo! Here!” And “Lo! There,” will be heard on all sides. Anchors are up, winds are out, and the whole fleet is getting into confusion. Men in whose sanity and stability I once believed are being carried away with one fancy or another, and I am driven to cry, “What next? And what next?” We are only at the beginning of an era of mingled unbelief and fanaticism. Now we shall know who are God’s elect and who are not, for there are spirits abroad at this hour that would, if it were possible, deceive even the very elect. And those who are not deceived are, nevertheless, sorely put to it. Here is the patience of the saints. Let him look to himself who is not rooted and grounded in Christ, for the hurricane is coming. The signs of the times indicate a carnival of delusions. Men have ceased to be guided by the word, and claim to be themselves prophets. Now we shall see what we shall see. Blessed is the sheep that knows his Shepherd, and will not listen to the voice of strangers. But here is the way to be kept steadfast—“The Word of God abides in you.”

“*The Word of God*”—that is to say, we are to believe in the doctrines of God’s Word, and these will make us strong. What vigor they infuse into a man! Get the word well into you, and you will overcome the wicked one. When the devil tempted Luther, the Reformer’s grand grip of justification by faith made him readily victorious. Keep a fast hold of the doctrines of grace and Satan will soon give up attacking you, for they are like plate armor, through which no dart can ever force its way.

The promises of God’s Word, too, what power they give a man. To get hold of a, “shall” and “will” in the time of trouble is a heavenly safeguard. “My God will hear me.” “I will not fail you nor forsake you.” These are divine holdfasts. Oh, how strong a man is for overcoming the wicked one when he has such a promise at hand! Do not trust yourself out in the morning in the street, till you have laid a promise under your tongue. I see people put respirators on in foggy weather. They do not make them look very lovely, but I dare say they are useful. I recommend the best respirator for the pestilential atmosphere of this present evil world when I bid you fit a promise to your lips. Did not the Lord rout the tempter in the wilderness with that promise, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God shall man live”? Get the promises of God to lodge within you and you will be strong.

Then mind the precepts, for a precept is often a sharp weapon against Satan. Remember how the Lord Jesus Christ struck Satan a killing blow by quoting a precept—“It is written, You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only shall you serve.” If the precept had not been handy, with what would the adversary have been rebuked? Nor is a threat at all a weak weapon. The most terrible threats of God’s Word against sin are the best helps for Christians when they are tempted to sin—“How can I do this

great wickedness, and sin against God? How should I escape if I turned away from Him that speaks from heaven?" Tell Satan the threats and make him tremble. Every Word of God is life to holiness and death to sin. Use the word as your sword and shield, there is none like it.

Now notice that John not only mentions "the Word of God," but the Word of God "*in you*." The inspired word must be received into a willing mind. How? The Book which lies *there* is to be pleaded *here*, in the inmost heart, by the work of the Holy Spirit upon the mind. All, of *this* letter, has to be translated into spirit and life. "The Word of God abides in you"—that is, first to know it—next to remember it and treasure it up in your heart. Following upon this, we must understand it, learn the analogy of faith by comparing spiritual things with spiritual till we have learned the system of divine truth, and are able to set it forth and plead for it. It is, next, to have the word in your affections, to love it so that it is as honey or the droppings of the honeycomb to you. When this is the case, you must and shall overcome the wicked one. A man instructed in the Scriptures is like an armed knight, who when he goes among the throng inflicts many a wound, but suffers none, for he is locked up in steel.

Yes, but that is not all. It is not the Word of God in you alone, it is, "the Word of God *abides* in you." It is always there, it cannot be removed from you. If a man gets the Bible right into him, he is all right then, because he is full, and there is no room for evil. When you have filled a measure full of wheat you have effectually shut the chaff out. Men go after novel and false doctrines because they do not really know the truth, for if the truth had gotten into them and filled them, they would not have room for these daydreams. A man who truly knows the doctrines of grace is never removed from them. I have heard our opponents rave at what they call the obstinacy of our brethren. Once get the truth really into you, it will enter into the texture of your being, and nothing will get it out of you. It will also be your strength, by setting you watching against every evil thing. You will be on your guard if the word abides in you, for it is written, "When you go it will keep you." The Word of God will be to you a bulwark and a high tower, a castle of defense against the foe. Oh, see to it that the Word of God is in you, in your very soul, permeating your thoughts, and so operating upon your outward life, that all may know you to be a true Bible-Christian, for they perceive it in your words and deeds.

This is the sort of army that we need in the church of God—men that are strong by feeding on God's Word. Aspire to it, my brethren and sisters, and when you have reached it then aspire unto the third degree that you may become fathers in Israel. Up to this measure at any rate, let us endeavor to advance and advance at once.

Are there any here who are not young men in Christ Jesus because they are not in Christ Jesus at all? I cannot speak with you this morning, for my time is gone, but I am distressed for you. To be out of Christ is such an awful thing that a man had better be out of existence. Without God, without Christ—then you are without joy in life or hope in death. Not even a babe in the divine family! Then know this, that God shall judge those that are outside, and when He comes how swift and overwhelming will that judgment be! Inasmuch as you would not have Christ in this day, Christ will not have you in that day. Stay not out of Christ any longer! Seek His face and live, for, "He that believes in Him has everlasting life." May you be enabled to believe in Him at this moment, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—1 John 2.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—678, 681, 674.**

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